THE DUELL OF THE STAGS: A Poem.

Written by the Honourable
Sir *ROBERT HOWARD.*

In the SAVOY,
Printed for *Henry Herringman*, at the Sign of the *Anchor*, on the Lower Walk of the *New-Exchange.* 1668.

To His GRACE THE DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM.

My Lord,

I *Should beg your pardon, could I apprehend it were an error to present any thing to your Grace which comes from me, to whom I have made so entire a Dedication of my self; but this advantage appears in all real esteems and friendships, they are as much above the Ceremonies of the world, as the usual Practise of it; but your Grace has a farther Title to this, being more yours than Mine; as much as an Image made well shap't and polish't, is more properly due to him that gave it that perfection, then to him that first dig'd the stone out of the Quarry; it was an ill contriv'd House within, full of Entries and*

unuſeful paſſages, till your Grace was pleas'd to take them away, and make it Habitable for any Candid opinion.

At the ſame time when your Grace made this your own, you made me more juſtly yours; 'twas in your Confinement, where after ſome Concealment of your ſelf, to weigh the Circumſtances and Cauſes of your perſecution, you generouſly expos'd your ſelf to ſtand all hazards and tryals, from the aſſurance of your Courage, and adviſe of your Innocence; and as your Grace in your adverſity has found the advantage of an unſhaken Honour, I doubt not but your Prince and Nation will find an equal benefit in your better Fortunes, by your Council and Service, which will always be directed by ſuch a ſteady vertue; and may all advantages that you encreaſe in, and all the Nation receives by you, be equal'd by nothing but the Content of

My Lord,

Your Graces moſt Humble
and faithful Servant

ROBERT HOVVARD.

THE DVELL OF THE STAGGS.

IN *Windſor* Foreſt, before Warr deſtroy'd,
The harmleſs Pleaſures which ſoft Peace injoy'd;
A mighty Stagg grew Monarch of the Heard,
By all his ſavage Slaves obey'd, and fear'd:
And while the Troops about their Soveraign fed,
They watch't the awfull nodding of his head.

Still as he paſſeth by, they all remove,
Proud in Dominion, Prouder in his Love:
[And while with pride and appetite he ſwells;]
He courts no choſen object, but compels:
No Subject his lov'd Miſtreſs dares deny,
But yields his hopes up to his tyranny.

Long had this Prince imperiouſly thus ſway'd,
By no ſet *L*aws, but by his will obey'd;
His fearful ſlaves, to full obedience grown,
Admire his ſtrength, and dare not uſe their own.

One ſubject moſt did his ſuſpicion move,
That ſhow'd leſt fear, and counterfeited love;
In the beſt Paſtures by his ſide he fed,
Arm'd with two large Militia's on his head:
As if he practic'd Majeſty, he walk't,
And at his nod, he made not haſte, but ſtalk't.
By his large ſhade, he ſaw how great he was,
And his vaſt Layers on the bended graſs.
His thoughts as large as his proportion grew,
And judg'd himſelf, as fit for Empire too.

Thus

Thus to rebellious hopes he ſwell'd at length,
Love and Ambition growing with his ſtrength.
This hid ambition his bold Paſſion ſhowes
And from a Subject to a Rival grows.
Sollicits all his Princes, fearful Dames,
And in his ſight Courts with rebellious flames.

The Prince ſees this with an inflamed eye,
But looks are only ſignes of Majeſty:
When once a Prince's Will meets a reſtraint,
His power is then eſteem'd but his complaint.
His Head then ſhakes, at which th'affrighted Heard,
Start to each ſide; his Rival not afear'd,
Stands by his Miſtreſs ſide, and ſtirs not thence,
But bids her own his Love, and his Defence.

The Quarrel now to a vaſt height is grown,
Both urg'd to fight by Paſſion, and a Throne;
But Love has moſt excuſe, for all we find
Have Paſſions, though not Thrones alike aſſign'd.

The Soveraign Stagg ſhaking his loaded head,
On which his Scepters with his Arms were ſpread,
Wiſely by Nature, there together fix't,
Where with the Tytle, the Defence was mix't.
The Pace which he advanc'd with to engage,
Became at once his Majeſty, and Rage:
T'other ſtands ſtill with as much confidence,
To make his part ſeem only his defence.

Their heads now meet, and at one blow each ſtrikes,
As many ſtrokes, as if a rank of Pikes
Grew on his brows, as thick their Antlers ſtand
Which every year kind Nature does disband.
Wild Beaſts ſometimes in peace and quiet are,
But Man no ſeaſon free's from love or warr.

With equal ſtrength they met, as if two oakes
Had fell, and mingled with a thouſand ſtroaks.
One by Ambition urg'd, t'other Diſdain,
One to Preſerve, the other fought to Gain:
The Subjects, and the Miſtreſſes ſtood by,
With Love and Duty to crown Victory:

For

For all Affections wait on proſperous Fame,
Not he that climbs, but he that falls, meets ſhame.

While thus with equall Courages they meet,
The wounded Earth yields to their ſtrugling feet;
And while one flydes, t'other purſues the fight,
And thinks that forc't Retreat looks like a Flight:
But then aſham'd of his retreat, at length
Drives his Foe back, his rage renews his ſtrength.

As even weights into a motion thrown,
By equall turns, drive themſelves up and down;
So ſomtimes one, then t'other Stag prevails,
And Victory yet doubtfull holds the ſcales.

The Prince aſham'd to be oppoſ'd ſo long,
With all his ſtrengh united ruſhes on;
The Rebel weaker, then at firſt appears,
And from his courage ſinks unto his fears.
Not able longer to withſtand his might,
From a Retreat at laſt ſteals to a Flight.

The mighty Stagg purſues his flying Foe,
Till his own pride of Conqueſt made him ſlow;
Thought it enough to ſcorn a thing that flyes,
And only now perſu'd him with his eyes.

The Vanquiſh'd as he fled, turn'd back his ſight
Aſham'd to flye, and yet affraid to fight:
Sometimes his wounds, as his excuſe ſurvay'd,
Then fled again, and then look back and ſtay'd:
Bluſh't that his wounds ſo ſlight ſhould not deny
Strength for a fight, that left him ſtrength to flye.
Calls thoughts of Love and Empire to his ayd,
But fears more powerful then all thoſe perſwade,
And yet in ſpight of them retains his ſhame,
His Cool'd ambition, and his half-quench'd flame.
There's none from their own ſenſe of ſhame can flye,
And dregs of paſſions dwell with miſery.

Now to the Shades he bends his feeble courſe,
Deſpiſ'd by thoſe, that once Admir'd his force:
The wretch that to a ſcorn'd condition's thrown,
With the Worlds favour, looſes too his own.

While

While fawning Troops their Conquering Prince
Now render'd abſolute by being oppoſ'd; (encloſ'd
Princes by diſobedience get Command,
And by new quench'd Rebellions firmer ſtand;
Till by the boundleſs offers of ſucceſſe,
They meet their Fate in ill-uſ'd happineſſe.

The vanquiſh't Stagg to thickeſt ſhades repaires,
Where he finds ſafety puniſh't with his cares;
Thorough the Woods he ruſhes not, but glides,
And from all ſearches but his own he hides;
Aſham'd to live, unwilling yet to looſe,
That wretched life he knew not how to uſe.

In this retirement thus he liv'd conceal'd,
Till with his wounds, his fears were almoſt heal'd;
His antient paſſions now began to move,
He thought again of Empire, and of Love:
Then rouz'd himſelf, and ſtretch'd at his full length,
Took the large meaſure of his mighty ſtrength;
Then ſhook his loaded head; the ſhadow too,
Shook like a tree, where leaveleſs branches grew.

Stooping to drink, he ſees it in the ſtreams,
And in the Woods hears claſhing of his Beams;
No accident but does alike proclaim
His growing ſtrength, and his encreaſing ſhame.

Now once again, reſolves to try his Fate,
(For Envy always is importunate;)
And in the Mind perpetually does move,
A fit Companion for unquiet Love.
He thinks upon his Mighty Enemy
Circl'd about with Pow'r, and Luxury.
And hop'd his ſtrength might ſink in his deſires,
Remembring he had waſted in ſuch Fires.
Yet while he hop'd by them to overcome,
He wiſht the others fatal joys his own.

Thus the unquiet Beaſt in ſafety lay,
Where nothing was to fear, nor to obey;
Where he alone Commanded, and was Lord,
Of every Bounty, Nature did afford,
Chooſe feaſts for every Arbitrary ſenſe,
An Empire in the ſtate of Innocence.

But

But all the Feaſts, Nature before him plac't,
Had but faint reliſhes to his loſt taſte.
Sick minds, like Bodies in a Feaver ſpent,
Turns Food to the Diſeaſe, not Nouriſhment.

Sometimes he ſtole abroad, and ſhrinking ſtood,
Under the ſhelter of the friendly Wood;
Caſting his envious eyes towards thoſe Plains
Where with Crown'd Joys, his Mighty Rival Reigns.
He ſaw th' obeying Herd marching along,
And weigh'd his Rivals Greatneſs by the Throng.
Want, takes falſe meaſures, both of power, and joys,
And envy'd Greatneſs is but Crowd, and Noiſe.

Not able to endure this hated ſight,
Back to the Shades he flies to ſeek out Night.
Like exiles from their Native ſoils, though ſent
To better Countreys, think it Baniſhment.
Here he enjoy'd, what 'tother could have there,
The Woods as Shady, and the Streams as Cleer,
The Paſtures more untainted where he fed,
And every night, choſe out an unpreſt Bed.

But

But then his lab'ring ſoul with Dreams was preſt,
And found the greateſt wearyneſs in Reſt;
His dreadful Rival in his ſleep appears,
And in his Dreams again, he fights, and fears:
Shrinks at the ſtroaks of t'others Mighty Head,
Feels every wound, and dreams how faſt he fled.
At this he wakes, and with his fearful eyes,
Salutes the Light, that Fleet the *Eaſtern* Skies.
Still half amaz'd, looks round, and held by fear,
Scarce can Believe, no Enemy was neer.
But when he ſaw his heedleſs fears were brought,
Not by a Subſtance, but a drowzy Thought,
His ample ſides he ſhakes, from whence the Dew
In ſcatter'd ſhowers, like driven Tempeſts flew.
At which, through all his Breaſt new boldneſs ſpread,
And with his Courage, rais'd his Mighty Head.
Then by his Love inſpir'd, reſolves to try
The Combat now, and overcome, or die.
Every weak Paſſion ſometimes is above
The fear of Death, much more the Nobleſt Love.
By Hope 'tis ſcorn'd, and by diſpair 'tis ſought,
Perſu'd by Honour, and by ſorrow brought.

Reſolv'd

Reſolv'd the paths of danger now to tread,
From his ſcorn'd ſhelter, and his fears, he fled.
With a brave haſte now ſeeks a ſecond Fight,
Redeems the baſe one by a Noble flight.

In the mean time, the Conqueror injoy'd
That Power by which he was to be deſtroy'd.
How hard 'tis for the Proſperous to ſee,
That Fate which waits on Power, and Victory.

Thus he ſecurely Raign'd, when in a Rout,
He ſaw th affrighted Heard flying about;
As if ſome Huntſmen did their Chaſe Purſue,
About themſelves in ſcatter'd Rings they flew.
He like a careful Monarch, rais'd his Head,
To ſee what Cauſe that ſtrange diſturbance bred;

But when the ſearcht-out Cauſe appear'd no more,
Then from a Slave, he had o'recome before,
A bold diſdain did in his Looks appear,
And ſhook his Aweful Head to chide their Fear.
The Herd afraid of Friend and Enemy,
Shrink from the one, and from the other Fly;

They

They ſcarce know which they ſhould obey, or truſt,
Since Fortune only makes it ſafe and juſt.

Yet in deſpight of all his Pride, he ſtaid,
And this unlookt for Chance with trouble weigh'd.

His Rage, and his Contempt alike, ſwell'd high,
And onely fear'd his Enemy ſhould Flie;
He thought of former Conqueſt, and from thence
Couzn,d himſelf into a Confidence.

T'other that ſaw his Conqueror ſo neer,
Stood ſtill and liſtned to a whiſp'ring fear;
From whence he heard his Conqueſt, and his ſhame;
But new-born Hopes his antient fears o'recame.

The Mighty Enemies now met at length,
With equal Fury, though not equal Strength;
For now, too late, the Conqueror did find,
That all was waſted in him but his Mind.
His Courage in his Weakneſs yet prevails,
As a bold Pilot ſteers with tatter'd Sails;

And

And Cordage crackt, directs no ſteddy Courſe,
Carry'd by Reſolution, more then Force.
Before his once ſcorn'd Enemy he reels,
His Wounds encreaſing with his Shame, he feels
The others ſtrength, more from his weakneſs grows,
And with one furious puſh, his Rival throws.

So a tall Oak, the pride of all the Wood,
That long th'Aſſault of ſeveral ſtorms had ſtood;
Till by a Mighty Blaſt more pow'rfully puſht,
His Root's torn up, and to the Earth he ruſht.

Yet then he rais'd his Head, on which there Grew
Once, all his Power, and all his Title too;
Unable now to riſe, and leſs to fight,
He rais'd thoſe Scepters to demand his Right:
But ſuch weak Arguments prevail with none,
To plead their Titles, when their Power is gone.

His Head now ſinks, and with it all defence,
Not only rob'd of Power, but Pretence.
Wounds upon wounds, the Conqueror ſtill gives,
And thinks himſelf unſafe, while t'other lives:

Unhappy State of ſuch as wear a Crown
Fortune can never lay 'em gently down.

Now to the moſt ſcorn'd Remedy he flies,
And for ſome pitty ſeems to move his Eyes;
Pitty, by which the beſt of virtue's Try'd,
To wretched Princes ever is deny'd.
There is a Debt to Fortune, which they pay
For all their Greatneſs, by no Common way.

The flatt'ring Troops unto the Victor fly,
And own his Tytle to his Victory;
The faith of moſt, with Fortune does decline,
Duty's but Fear, and Conſcience but Deſign.
The Victor now, proud in his great ſucceſs,
Haſtes to enjoy his fatal Happineſs;
Forgot his Mighty Rival was deſtroy'd
By that, which he ſo fondly now enjoy'd.

In Paſſions, thus Nature her ſelf enjoys,
Sometimes preſerves, and then again deſtroys;
Yet all deſtruction which revenge can move,
Time or Ambition, is ſupply'd by Love.

FINIS.